

## The Collapse of Communism

And the world watched with wonder ...

## The Gorbachev Revolution

- Mikhail Gorbachev was a different kind of Soviet leader. He recognized that the Soviet Union could not remain politically and economically isolated and that the Soviet system had to be changed if it was to survive.



## Gorbachev's Five-Point Plan

- The key pieces to Gorbachev's plan for the survival of the Soviet Union were a series of reforms:
  - [Glasnost](#) (openness) – greater freedom of expression
  - [Perestroika](#) (restructuring) – decentralization of the Soviet economy with gradual market reforms
  - The renunciation of the [Brezhnev Doctrine](#) (armed intervention where socialism was threatened) and the pursuit of arms control agreements
  - Reform of the [KGB](#)
  - The reform of the [Communist Party](#)

## The Objective: Survival

- Gorbachev knew that the Soviet Union would have to change if it was to survive.
  - [Central planning](#) in a modern industrial economy brought many inefficiencies.
  - The [factory management system](#) provided little incentive to make technological improvements and every incentive to hide factory capacities to ensure low quotas
  - The [socialist farm system](#) was inefficient – there were poor worker incentives and storage and transportation problems.
  - The Soviet State could no longer afford the [high defense spending](#) that accompanied the Cold War.

## Insistent Calls for Change

- He believed that his reforms were necessary and used his leadership and power to attempt to implement them.
- The policy of [glasnost](#) made it possible for people to more freely criticize the government's policies. When people realized it was safe to speak out, the calls for change became more insistent.

## Reforms Were Too Slow

- The gradual market reforms and decentralization of the economy ([perestroika](#)) were too slow and failed keep pace with the crisis and his people's demands.
- The Soviet Union was suffering a deterioration of economic and social conditions and a fall in the GNP.

## Party Reforms a Failure

- His attempts to reform the **Communist Party** were a failure. Change was too slow to keep pace with events and he was continually hampered by his need to give in to the hard-liners in order to retain power.
- As communism collapsed in Eastern Europe, reform of communism within the Soviet Union became unlikely.

## The Collapse of the Soviet Union

- The renunciation of the **Brezhnev Doctrine** released the Eastern European states from Soviet domination.
- The communist rulers of these states could not survive without the support of the Soviet Union.

## Reagan's Brandenburg Gate Speech

- President Ronald Reagan called upon Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall: "In the Communist world, we see failure, technological backwardness, declining standards... Even today, the Soviet Union cannot feed itself. The inescapable conclusion is that freedom is the victor. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"



President Reagan giving a speech at the Berlin Wall, Brandenburg Gate, Federal Republic of Germany. June 12, 1987

## The Wall Came Down

- Not long afterward, a surprise to nearly everyone, the wall came down. On the 9th of November, 1989, East Germany was open to West Germany. Events moved swiftly. Communism rapidly fell in Eastern Europe, and finally in the Soviet Union.



## The Rise of Nationalism

- With the iron grip of the centralized Soviet state relaxed and the growing failure of the state to adequately feed and clothe its people, nationalism in the republics surged and separatist movements threatened the very existence of the Soviet Union.

## The End of the Cold War

- The now weak Soviet state was unable to prevent the separation of the republics, and even the republic of Russia turned away, choosing Boris Yeltsin as its leader. Gorbachev found that there was no Soviet Union to be the leader of, and retired into private life. The cold war was over.

## Nobel Peace Prize

- Gorbachev won the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize. He brought a peaceful end to the cold war, and dramatic change to his country's economy, though not in the way he intended.